



From Our CEO



Dear Friends,

It is with great pride that I share with you Synod's Annual Report, outlining some of the highlights of services provided in 2014. We invite you to learn about the work we do in helping our communities become places where those who are marginalized and vulnerable feel welcome and able to make a home.

Something that does not translate easily to numbers but is one of Synod's most important contributions to the communities we serve, is our application of the Harm Reduction Model. This approach allows us to meet clients where they are in their lives and work side by side with them to achieve their goals. Harm Reduction goes hand in hand with individualized services and flexible service delivery. It means that as long as the desire to progress forward is present, we will accept someone with an addiction disorder into our supportive housing program and continue to work with them even after a slip from sobriety,

This is the service model that inspired Synod to open the Co-op, a single room occupancy, staffed duplex for 6 men suffering from co-occurring mental health and addiction disorders. Despite the absence of similar programs offering

a model that could be duplicated or built upon, Dana Leahy, Program Supervisor, and Marty Brown, Program Manager worked tirelessly and creatively to grow the program from the ground up, developing protocol and policies to address the men's needs in an environment both structured and supportive. As an example of success, this past year one of the original 6 men who moved in to Co-op when it first opened in 2004, achieved his goal of sobriety and stability, and has graduated to his own apartment. The Co-op stands as a striking example of the creativity and dedication inherent in the staff and programs throughout our agency.

Whether it lies in being one of the only agencies in Washtenaw County that will work with hoarders to abate life altering clutter, or being one of the only agencies willing to provide housing with services to individuals who have a history of difficulty living in the community, Synod has an earned reputation of standing with our consumers, rolling up our collective sleeves and helping.

Thank you for your support,

Keta J. Cowan,
Chief Executive Officer

Community Housing

More Than Housing

Not that long ago, in the United States, people with mental illness were exiled to live confined and maltreated in asylums and massive state hospitals. What came to be known as "institutionalization" was imposed like a life sentence by courts and families under a legal regime that disregarded the rights and inherent humanity of the mentally ill individuals who fell under its jurisdiction.

With the advent of the disability rights movement of the 1970s, individuals with mental illness began to be deinstitutionalized - transitioned out of large state hospitals and into community based housing. It was this landscape that gave rise to Synod House, Synod's first program providing housing and services for mentally ill men in Ypsilanti Michigan.

Now 40 years later, Synod operates and staffs 13 community houses, providing full support services including meals, assistance with community access, skill rehabilitation, person centered planning support and assistance with personal needs.

In Fiscal Year 2014, Synod provided:

- 231,423 hours of support service
- 13 staffed programs providing life supports and housing to 77 individuals at a time, totaling
- 24,884 bednights of housing and assistance, and
- Staff accompaniment to 1,995 appointments

**I think this is the best group home I have been in.
The staff treats us as adults and we have our privacy.
– Group Home Client**

Hoarding Abatement

When There's Nowhere Else to Turn

While research continues into the origins and causes of hoarding, we are beginning to understand that it is not a symptom of depression or of obsessive compulsion, but rather as its own discrete debilitating condition. Hoarding is a psychological disorder characterized by the collection of a large volume of possessions that appear to have little or no value and that the person has great difficulty discarding. The sheer volume of items eventually fills the living space preventing fundamental use of the areas of the home as intended. It is estimated that hoarding affects 1.4 million homes in the United States.

In Washtenaw County, the Hoarding Task Force has taken the lead in raising public awareness about the disorder and in developing best practices and early intervention strategies to preserve safe and appropriate housing for everyone.

Although the 14 public and private agencies that make up the Hoarding Task Force of Washtenaw County, provide hoarding assessments, agency referrals, workshops and professional training, there was an unmet need for direct, physical clean-out assistance.

To address this need, Synod developed a hoarding abatement service. It is one of the few resources available that applies best practices in helping individuals and families remove the collections and debris that render their living spaces unusable.

In 2014,

- 28 individuals received 235 hours of assistance with Hoarding Abatement
- Most significantly, 82% of those we helped agreed to repeat visits to continue discarding unneeded goods.



Before



After

They are willing to let me work at a slow pace and don't say anything bad, just encourage me to keep going.

– Hoarding Abatement Services Client

Financial Services

Economic Guidance and Money Management

Although we are all different in personality, background and temperament, to name just a few points of distinction, we are fundamentally alike in the nature of our basic needs and in the resources required to meet them. Synod's Economic Guidance and Money Management program provides budgeting and bill pay support that ensures that a person's housing, utilities, food and clothing are secured and paid for while the individual client focuses on money management and budgeting skills.

A small staff of account representatives not only manage budgets and reconcile accounts but offer relief to those clients who need support negotiating with utility companies and other creditors over inflated, unsubstantiated or overdue bills.

Since first offering this program in the early 1990s Synod has assisted thousands of clients in living stable, independent lives in the community. We have watched as clients have purchased vehicles, returned to work, gotten married, opened and learned to balance their own checking and savings accounts and eventually graduated from Synod's service entirely.

The program strives to:

- Preserve a client's benefits by ensuring that all eligibility requirements are annually met and that required documentation is timely submitted.
- Teach clients to prioritize expenses related to meeting their basic needs and learn to save for less urgent items.
- Preserve a client's dignity and privacy when advocating and negotiating for them by helping in the least intrusive way possible.
- Provide money management assistance that enables clients to live as independently as possible

In 2014, Synod

- Met the basic needs and living expense of 184 people
- Managed over \$2,000,000 for necessities and household bills
- Had a waiting list of over 25 clients - due to shortfalls in funding

Synod is a life saver. I couldn't manage on my own.

– Financial Services Client

Supported Housing

Building Solutions

Synod owns and manages safe, well-maintained, low -income housing that provides a supportive environment for special populations.

Deake House is a Single Room Occupancy home for previously homeless seniors located in a neighborhood between Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti. In partnership with the Housing Bureau for Seniors, Synod provides a shared house for individuals over the age of 55 who have fallen out of traditional housing, often for economic reasons, and have no place else to live. Tenants may stay as long as they like.

In 2014, Deake provided 1399 bed-nights of housing

The Linda apartments, located in Monroe, Michigan consist of 3 one bedroom and 1 two bedroom apartment consciously made available to individuals with a mental illness. The traditional obligations and rights of tenancy govern these living arrangements and tenure may continue indefinitely as long as the tenant upholds the lease agreement.

In 2014, Linda provided 2190 bed-nights of housing

The Co-op is a Single Room Occupancy duplex located in Ann Arbor Michigan. It provides sober housing with on-site staff support for to up to 6 men. Tenants share common areas and in addition to recovery services receive support learning self-sufficient skills including cooking, laundry, budgeting and cleaning. Many of the men who move to the Co-op were homeless.

In 2014, The Co-op provided 1919 bed-nights of housing

Community Staffing

Supporting Independence

Many individuals whose quality of life improves with supportive service, are not eligible for or do not wish to be connected to traditional mental health providers. Synod makes experienced, trained staff available without referral to deliver on-going or discrete supports in furtherance of an individual's goals. In this way, community staffing represents a creative strategy for outreach and engagement to underserved populations.

In 2014, Synod delivered more than 19,532 hours of community staffing in Washtenaw and Oakland counties.

Conservatorships and Guardianships

Also available to the public without referral, Synod offers conservatorship and guardianship services to oversee the well-being of individuals who are severely disabled and who need legal support to manage their affairs and decision-making. When, for a variety of reasons, family members are unable to provide or to continue providing assistance, Synod will make an independent determination of the suitability of becoming an organizational guardian or conservator for the person in need. When appropriate Synod will file the necessary petitions and work with the court appointed guardian ad litem to fully assess the individual's needs.

In 2014 Synod served as guardian or conservator for 4 individuals.

Community Pooled Trust

An Innovative Solution to Losing Benefits

In Michigan disabled individuals receiving Medicaid health insurance or Supplemental Security Income ("SSI") are subject to limitations governing the amount of resources they are allowed to possess. Late back payments from Social Security for benefits on which the person has been waiting, legal settlements from accidents or inheritances from loved ones, could without intention terminate both the disabled person's health insurance and his or her only source of income.

The solution for individuals who cannot afford attorney fees to create and maintain a private trust is a pooled disability trust. Synod opens a separate sub-account for each disabled participant but pools the funds for investment management purposes.

Synod's pooled disability trust is the only community pooled trust in Michigan that is accessible to everyone, where deposits of any amount are welcome. Before Synod initiated its program, trust funds benefited only the wealthy. The Synod pooled disability trust preserves the Medicaid and SSI benefits of disabled individuals while accumulating funds for services not covered by Medicaid such as dental work or for goods that provide supplemental health, dignity, purpose, optimism and joy to the beneficiary.

Synod assisted a client under the age of 65 years with a disability arising from a car accident, who was receiving SSI and Medicaid. She had been awarded a legal settlement of over \$50,000, far in excess of the \$2,000 resource limit imposed by Social Security. Synod staff helped her establish a subaccount in the agency's pooled trust, used to hold funds that otherwise threaten a person's eligibility for benefits. Because Social Security does not count funds in the pooled trust against recipients, she remained below the \$2,000 cap and endured no period of ineligibility for either SSI or Medicaid. She has used funds in her pooled trust subaccount for goods and services that SSI and Medicaid do not pay like utility bills, therapy, dental care, and a vehicle purchase,

This year the Synod Pooled Trust:

- Has over \$290,000 under management
- Preserved benefits for 77 disabled individuals

Financial Information

Statement of Activities

October 1, 2013 - September 30, 2014

REVENUE

Contract Revenue	\$4,614,434
Resident Fees and Fees Paid on Behalf of Residents	\$829,779
Other Revenue	\$21,409
Total Operating Revenue and Support	\$5,465,622

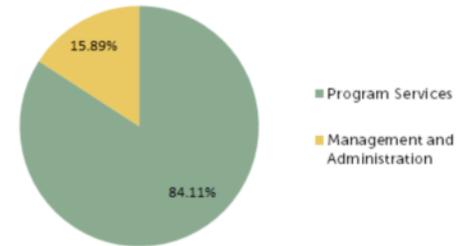
EXPENSES

Program Services	\$4,436,933
Management and General Administration	\$838,313
Total Operating Expenses	\$5,275,246

Net Assets - beginning of the fiscal year	\$1,982,144
Net Assets - end of the fiscal year	\$2,172,520
Change in Net Assets	\$190,376

As you can see in the graph below, operating expenses for management and administration for the 2013-2014 fiscal year was only about 16% of our total operating expenses.

Expenses FY 2013-2014



How You Can Help

By Making a Financial Contribution

Your donations allow Synod to provide essential assistance, including meals, medication delivery, bill pay and mental health support, as well as other basic and necessary care. Because the cost of providing these services has outpaced government funding, we have been forced to terminate services to many disabled people who have no one else to turn to.

They need your help.

By Becoming a Synod Volunteer

Volunteers have helped pay bills for homeless mentally ill adults, painted kitchens and called bingo on a Friday night. We're calling for individuals at every level, from those who wish to work directly with clients to people working on their behalf at our main office.

By Donating a Vehicle

Our resources have so thinned that we are forced to tell staff, "If the car breaks down, park it." We can no longer afford to repair the vehicles needed to transport clients, deliver medication or provide meals. If you have a vehicle that's old but running, donate it to us!

Your car can deliver service to elderly and disabled individuals who need a hand.

By Supporting Our Fundraising Efforts

To leverage greater value from your gift, please consider donating gift certificates or items for auction or raffle.

Every little bit helps.

Call 734-483-9363 for more information.

Thanks For Your Support

Synod Community Services would like to thank all those who provided support during the 2013-2014 Fiscal Year.

2013-2014 Donors as of September 30, 2014

Ken Antkowiak

Diana Arnest

Scott Arnest

Matthew Ajluni

Harriet Bakalar

Keta Cowan

Eboni Creighton

Keisha Duvall

Natasha Duvall

Randall Haas

David Harenchar

Florence Heskett

David Mente

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Sherrie Kossoudji

Jack LaPan III

Charo Ledon

Edward Maki-Schramm

John Nipper

Lawrence Root

Tom Stachler

Dorothy Stock

Edwin Tobes

Planned gifts to SCS can be made through bequests, trusts, charitable gift annuities, life insurance, personal property, real estate and retirement plan assets. As a 501(c)3 not for profit agency, gifts to Synod Community Services are fully tax deductible in accordance with IRS regulations. A letter will be provided acknowledging all donations.

Our Team

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